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KAZAKHSTAN

CASE STUDY

New Technology Aids Transparency

High-tech court recording system improves transparency in Kazakhstan's judicial system



*A judge during the case hearing at the Almaty's Bostandyk District Court.
Photo: Andrey Feodorov*

“A tool to increase transparency and the administration of justice in Kazakhstan.”

-Chief Justice Mami of the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan, speaking about the videorecording system, installed at the court by the USAID Kazakhstan Judicial Assistance Project.

Challenge

Court recording of judicial proceedings provides a verbatim record of trial events. While a verbatim record is typical in many Western countries, in Kazakhstan, court proceedings are typically hand-written by the court secretary. These records are not verbatim transcripts, but essentially only summaries of the case. Some courts also use audio recording, but this system produces transcripts of imperfect quality and is itself prone to manipulation.

Initiative

In the spring of 2006 USAID's Kazakhstan Judicial Assistance Project, in cooperation with the Republic's Supreme Court, launched a 12-month pilot initiative to introduce new ways of increasing the quality and accuracy of court transcripts in the country's courts. USAID's project installed a high-tech video recording system at the Bostandyk District Court in Almaty. Two civil and two criminal courtrooms were equipped with a unique system of four video cameras and up to six microphones that thoroughly and accurately captures all aspects of a court case and provides a verbatim record. The pilot will continue through February 2007, at which point the USAID project will present its recommendations about the system to Kazakhstan's judiciary.

Results

The new system has already made a positive impact in the court's work: according to monitoring results, rates of filed appeals and complaints for recorded cases are significantly lower than for non-recorded cases. Equipment's capabilities have already generated intense interest in other district courts, with several requesting that they be the next to receive it. The video recording technology is also widely publicized by the media, contributing to the debate within the judicial system of its future possibilities.